

Director of AEFÉ visit to Rochambeau in February 2020 Minutes

March 2, 2020

Dear Rochambeau community,

As previously communicated, the Director of the AEFÉ, M. Olivier Brochet, came to Washington for a two-day visit to Rochambeau last week. His visit was prompted by the recent resignation of M. Leroy-Lusson as Proviseur and a desire to discuss and better understand the needs of Rochambeau and the changes in school governance structures within the past year.

During the course of his visit, the Director had the opportunity to see the Forest Road campus, tour the site of our proposed new lower school campus, and meet with teacher and staff representatives, student representatives, the school's leadership team and members of the Board. He also held an open meeting with parents to hear their perspectives and answer many of their questions regarding the AEFÉ, the future status of Rochambeau within the AEFÉ, and the appointment of a new Proviseur for the school.

The Director reiterated the AEFÉ's strong commitment to Rochambeau. He acknowledged the importance of the school to the AEFÉ network, given its strategic location in Washington, DC, the strength of its programs and its outstanding results. He also recognized the importance of the capital projects that are underway to provide Rochambeau with significantly improved facilities which will allow it to grow its enrollment and ensure its long-term success.

The discussions with the Director of the AEFÉ centered primarily on how the next Proviseur will be appointed and how this will impact Rochambeau's relationship with the AEFÉ moving forward.

What is the AEFÉ?

Rochambeau has been part of the [AEFÉ](#) network since the network was established over 30 years ago. The French President has set a goal for the AEFÉ to double the number of students enrolled in network schools by 2030. Currently, the AEFÉ network includes 522 schools in 139 countries with 370,000 students – 71 of those schools are managed directly by the AEFÉ (called "en gestion directe"), 156 of the schools have entered into a specific contractual agreement with the AEFÉ (called "conventionnés"), and 295 of the schools have a partnership arrangement with the AEFÉ (called "partenaires"). Of the 57 schools in the AEFÉ network in the United States, only two (Rochambeau and the Lycée Français in San

Francisco) are “conventionnés” while the rest (including the prestigious Lycées in New York, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles) are all “partenaires.” ([See maps & infographics here](#))

What are the terms of Rochambeau's agreement with the AEFÉ?

Under the terms of its new “convention” negotiated by the Board three years ago, Rochambeau pays 3% of its tuition revenues (which represents around \$650,000) to the AEFÉ, and the AEFÉ provides Rochambeau the proviseur, the director of the maternelle, and 7 full-time teachers. These staff members are expat employees of the AEFÉ who typically have a short-term assignment. In addition, the AEFÉ has agreed to contribute \$200,000 per year for 5 years towards the costs of preliminary studies regarding the new campus project. All of the other 113 teachers, as well as the other administrators and staff of the school are locally hired by Rochambeau, without any involvement of the AEFÉ. Rochambeau's current agreement with the AEFÉ has a 5-year term and expires at the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

Under the terms of its prior “convention,” Rochambeau contributed 6% of its total gross tuition to the AEFÉ, which the Director stated is the standard contribution rate for schools that are “conventionnés.”

What is the difference with a “partenaire” school?

Schools that have a partnership arrangement with the AEFÉ are full members of the AEFÉ network, which allows students from one AEFÉ network school to seamlessly transition to any other AEFÉ network school worldwide. The difference is that they do not contribute a share of their tuition revenue to the AEFÉ and the AEFÉ does not provide any personnel or have any responsibility for the management of the school.

How does this impact accreditation by the French Ministry of Education?

French Schools outside of France are accredited by the French Ministry of Education (which is distinct from the AEFÉ) to deliver the French educational programs at various grade levels. Rochambeau's accreditation was renewed for all grade levels (from TPS through Terminale) last year. The accrediting commission emphasized the prestige and the leading role the school plays for French education in the United States, noted the high percentage of teachers that are certified teachers from the French Ministry of Education, and praised its outstanding academic results, ambitious new campus project, the way the school is run, its many dynamic projects, how the French programs are implemented, and how those are combined with multilingual programs that are well suited to its student population. The

commission also recognized the challenging competitive environment in which the school operates, the magnitude of the new campus project, and the challenges of offering a compelling pedagogical offering to a population that is increasingly anglophone while maintaining its [core mission](#) for French families. The commission noted the changes in governance that were recently implemented and the school's decision to implement an IB Diploma program as a secondary offering to the French Bac in order to increase retention and grow enrollment. The accrediting commission will do a follow-up visit during the 2020/2021 school year to review the impact of the changes in governance and the implementation of the IB Program.

What is Rochambeau's current management structure?

Rochambeau's current governance structure, including in particular the locally hired management team, were intentionally designed to offer stability and continuity for the long-term strategic planning of the school and to prevent the school from the mismanagement that had threatened its survival in the past. Last year, with the approval of the AEFÉ, the position of Executive Director was created with the authority to manage and represent the school in a way that a French-appointed Proviseur is legally unable to do in the US (which functions had previously been fulfilled by the President of the Board). The Proviseur reports to the Executive Director, as the full-time representative of the Board.

Responsibilities for Rochambeau's academic programs are currently shared between the Proviseur, who is responsible for all French programs and the Academic Director, who is responsible for English programs, Student Learning Support, IB program, and other programs that are not traditionally part of the French curriculum and programs. Both the Proviseur and the Academic Director report to the Executive Director. This division of responsibilities had been approved by the AEFÉ and included in the "lettre de mission" of the Proviseur signed by the Directeur of the AEFÉ.

What are the different options being considered for the appointment of the next Proviseur?

The discussions with the Director of the AEFÉ have made it clear that Rochambeau has two options to consider:

- (1) To have the next Proviseur appointed by the AEFÉ (subject to the approval of the Board of Rochambeau) in accordance with the terms of the existing "convention"; or
- (2) To have the next Proviseur selected and appointed by the Board of Rochambeau and to transition from a "conventionné" to a "partenaire" member of the AEFÉ.



The AEFE has indicated that its preference would be to pursue the first option but that, although it had previously approved the new governance structure for Rochambeau, it would now require certain changes to the management structure in place at the school, including by making the Academic Director a direct report of the Proviseur, and generally by providing that all academic programs and teaching staff are under the responsibility of the Proviseur.

What are the issues being considered and next steps?

The Board held two meetings with the Director of the AEFE during his visit last week. Three weeks prior to that visit, the Board of Trustees sent to the Director of the AEFE a list of questions related to governance, the future service of expatriate teachers sent by the AEFE, and the future financial conditions of our conventionnement. The Director did not have all the answers during his visit. Accordingly, we will hold additional meetings during the coming weeks to seek further information and clarifications on the conditions under which the school could maintain its "conventionné" status with the AEFE.

Among other things, we are seeking a clear understanding from the AEFE of the financial terms of a renewed "convention" after 2022, and assurances that Rochambeau can maintain and continue to enhance its various programs and offerings that may differ from the regular French programs and curriculum. The Board will also continue its dialogue with the various representatives of the Rochambeau community in order to come to a decision that will best serve the entire Rochambeau community and ensure that the school can achieve its mission, strategic objectives and long-term financial stability. To that end, the President of the Board will convene a meeting of the committee comprising elected representatives of all the constituencies of the school as soon as the answers of the AEFE will have been received in order to analyze those answers.

The Board remains committed to ensuring that Rochambeau has a new Proviseur in place for the start of the 2020-2021 school year and will meet as soon as Rochambeau has received sufficient information to make an informed decision.

